CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for tracking descriptive information about a changeable article:

a machine-readable label (MRL) attachable to articles;

one or more processors connectable to a MRL reader and programmed to create an association between data stored in an MRL with particular data describing a given article and store said association in a data store;

said particular data including a changeable characteristic of said given article;

said one or more processors being programmed to scan said MRL and permit a user to complete a transaction involving said given article including reading said particular data in said data store, said transaction being responsive to said particular data.

2. A system as in claim 1, wherein said one or more processors are programmed to accept update data indicating a change in said given article and to update said data describing said given article such that when said one or more processors scan said MRL and permit said user to complete a further transaction involving said given

article, said transaction is responsive to change in said given article.

3. A system as in claim 2, wherein said change is a change of quantity of a material of said article.

4. A system as in claim 1, wherein said data describing said given article includes a quantity of a material of said article.

5. A system as in claim 1, wherein said one or more processors are connectable to be controlled at a terminal such that a maker of said article can at least partially create said data describing said given article by inputting data into said terminal.

6. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a scale including a MRL reader, wherein said one or more processors are programmed to accept update data from said scale, said update data including a change in weight of said given article.

7. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a device for measuring a change in said given article, said device including a MRL reader, wherein said one or more processors are programmed to accept update data from said device, said update data including a change in said given article measured by said device.

8. A method for tracking descriptive information about a changeable article, comprising the steps of:

attaching a machine-readable label (MRL) to an article;

said MRL having a unique code;

at a retail establishment, storing a correlation between descriptive information about said article and said unique code in a data store; and

reading said unique code at a location other than said retail establishment to obtain at least a portion of said descriptive information using said correlation in said data store.

9. A method as in claim 8, wherein said descriptive information includes an initial quantity or size of said article.

10. A method as in claim 8, further comprising the step of reading said unique code and looking up said correlation responsively to said unique code at a location other than said retail establishment and modifying at least a portion of said descriptive information responsively to said correlation in said data store.

11. A method as in claim 10, wherein said descriptive information includes an initial quantity or size of said article.

12. A method as in claim 8, wherein said correlation in said data store is automatically deleted responsively to one or more predetermined events.

13. A method as in claim 12, wherein said one or more predetermined events includes the passage of a predetermined period of time after said step of storing a correlation.

14. A method for tracking descriptive information about a changeable article, comprising the steps of:

attaching a machine-readable label (MRL) to an article;

said MRL having a unique code;

storing a correlation between descriptive information about said article and said unique code in a data store; and

reading said unique code to obtain at least a portion of said descriptive information using said correlation in said data store;

deleting said correlation after the passage of a predetermined period of time after said step of storing.

15. A method as in claim 14, wherein said descriptive information includes an initial quantity or size of said article.

16. A method as in claim 14, further comprising the step of reading said unique code, looking up said correlation responsively to said unique code, and modifying at least a portion of said descriptive information responsively to said correlation in said data store.

17. A method as in claim 16, wherein said descriptive information includes an initial quantity or size of said article.